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# Life beyond Ritual?

## Preserving the Shamanic Performance Arts in South Korea Today

Complementing the growing body of studies that critically assess the objectives, workings and effects of the South Korean cultural preservation system (*munhwaje pohobŏp*)<sup>1</sup> and those that specifically explore the impacts of ‘top down’ cultural policy upon Korean shamanism (see, for example, Howard 2006: 135–158; Choi 1997; Kim Hŏnsŏn 2009; Pak Migyŏng 2011; and Yun Tonghwan 2012), this article focuses on four ‘preserved’ South Korean shamanic ritual (*kut*) traditions, each hailing from a different region of the Korean mainland:

- *Chindo Ssikkim kut* (appointed as Intangible Cultural Property (ICP) 72, 17/11/1980): a post-death cleansing ritual (*ssikkim kut*) from the Southwest island of Chindo, traditionally performed to appease the deceased’s spirit, guide it to the Buddhist paradise, and ensure ‘closure’ for the bereaved.
- *Tonghaean Pyŏlshin kut* (ICP 82-1, 1/2/1985): traditionally performed in communities along the East Sea coast (*tonghaean*) to ensure successful fishing and a state of harmony between all people and all major gods (*pyŏlshin*) in the region’s traditional pantheon.
- *Namhaean Pyŏlshin kut* (ICP 82-4, 1/7/1987): traditionally performed in communities along the South Sea coast (*namhaean*), with the same broad objectives as the East Sea equivalent (above).
- *Kyŏnggi Todang kut* (ICP 98, 10/10/1990): traditionally performed for communities in the southern part of Kyŏnggi province (around the capital Seoul), with particular focus on appeasing the community’s main tutelary deity (*todangshin*).

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Howard’s 2006 book offers the most comprehensive study of the system’s application and influence, extending beyond earlier overview-type studies (such as Yang Jongsung 2003). Amongst the numerous shorter studies, some advocate rigid regulation of appointed arts, regarding instances of appointed artists diverging from the documented norms as indicative of ‘systemic failure’ (Son T’aedo 2009). Others advocate the granting of artistic license (Chŏng Sujin 2006), celebrating cases where senior figures have been able to develop their artistry in line with changing needs and tastes (Maliangkay 2012). Still others question the benefits of having a top-down preservation system at all, suggesting that musicians should exercise their own grass-roots initiatives instead, as *samulnori* percussionists have done (Hesselink 2012: 131-138). Meanwhile, many studies offer practical solutions to perceived systemic problems – typically, lapses in fairness, accountability and efficiency in cultural transmission and dissemination (Chŏn Chinsŏk and Hong Kŏnp’yo 2012; Kim Yŏngguk and O Sŏnggyu 2014).

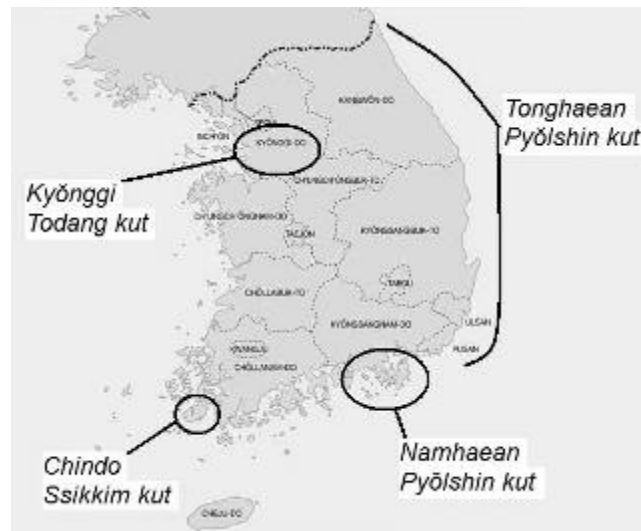


Figure 1. Map of South Korea, showing the traditional heartlands of the four focal hereditary shaman rituals

Addressing a paucity of coverage in the existing literature, this study aims to reveal how these traditions have been adapting to life in contemporary Korea – and, more specifically, responding to the preservation system’s intervention. As appointed traditions, they are evidently deemed of considerable historic cultural significance. However, as will become apparent, each offers a rather different picture of system/tradition interaction: each was in a rather different state at the time of appointment, each has faced rather different challenges subsequently, and, inevitably, each has been guided by markedly different configurations of personalities and skills. Facilitating and validating comparison, these traditions share some crucial points of commonality. First, they have traditionally been fostered by hereditary shamans (*sesŭmmu*) – ritual specialists who intermarry with other ritualist families and train their offspring into the profession. Second, they centre upon the performance of highly elaborate rituals (generally lasting more than a day), employing large repertoires of sung myths and prayers, diverse musical structures (executed by the officiating shaman together with a small instrumental ensemble), various dances and theatrical skits, a wide variety of ritual actions (both presentational and participatory), and a rich array of symbolic paraphernalia (decorating the space and functioning as props) – all geared towards restoring well-functioning relationships within the community and between people and deities.<sup>2</sup> Traditionally, they favour displays of artistic skill over displays of supernatural power – the latter being a much greater concern for the far more numerous and widespread charismatic shamans (*kangshinmu*). Third, they have been disappearing since the 1950s Korean War as modern ways of life and the adoption of non-shamanic belief systems have prompted client communities to consider the rituals expensive and unnecessary, while the hereditary shaman families have steadily been re-integrating with normal society, adopting less stigmatised professions (see also Mills 2007: 96–98). Scenes like the one shown in Illustration 1 below are increasingly rare. Fourth, although many non-believers consider Korean shaman rituals to promote backward superstitious thinking, at the same time, the rituals are recognised as potent icons of Korean identity (see Kim Chongho 2003): the rich blend of traditional artistic elements, patterns of behaviour, myths, and symbols are quintessentially Korean. Fifth, on account of their historical cultural

<sup>2</sup> Various YouTube videos capture these performing arts quite effectively, including: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBuczvNoXZg> (staged performance of *Ssikkim kut*), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EVAksS1YOE> (extracts from various village-sponsored *Tonghaean Pyolsin kut*), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpRqYcG7GUK> (extracts from Jukdo village’s *Namhaean Pyolsin kut*), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mgvgXwOdUM> (extracts from Changmal village’s *Todang kut*).

significance, distinctiveness, skilfulness and dwindling prevalence, all four traditions have been intercepted by the Korean cultural preservation system, becoming designated ICPs (Intangible Cultural Properties).<sup>3</sup>



Figure 2: *Tonghaean Pyölshin kut* in progress, Chuksan village, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2000. Here, a hereditary shaman troupe, hired by the village elders, is performing ritual in a tent that has been temporarily erected on the beach. The officiating female shaman stands centrally, with accompanying male musicians seated immediately around her and community members around the periphery.  
(photo by the author)

A primary objective here is to explore the perspectives of prominent present-day ritualists within the appointed groups, since their ideas and interpretations have tended to be, at best, only scantily represented in studies concerning Korean music heritage. Accordingly, I draw extensively from my own interviews with the following ritual musicians (left to right, below): Hwang Minwang from *Namhaean Pyölshin kut*, Pyön Namsöp from *Kyönggi Todang kut*, Cho Jonghun from *Tonghaean Pyölshin kut*, and Pak Sönghun from *Chindo Ssikkim kut*.<sup>6</sup> In the preservation system's ranking, these musicians have all attained the roughly middle-ranked position of '*isuja*' – literally, 'complete people', who are considered highly competent practitioners. At the time of writing, they are all aged from their early 30s to early 40s.

<sup>3</sup> This study does not consider various other appointed Korean shamanic traditions for a number of reasons: *Üsan pyölshinje* (ICP 9), *Kangnŭng tanoje* (ICP 13) and *Yangju Sonori kut* (ICP 70) are communal festivals that also incorporate diverse other activities beyond religious ritual; *Söhaean paeyönshin kut* with *Taedong kut* (ICP 82-2), *Wido ttipaennori* (ICP 82-3), *Hwanghaedo Pyöngsan sonorŭm kut* (ICP 90) and *Söul saenam kut* (ICP 104) are all traditionally charismatic forms (contrasting in many respects with the four focal traditions); and *Cheju ch'ilmöri tang kut* (ICP 71) is culturally and geographically rather removed from the mainland traditions (ICP details from Howard 2006: 183–185).

<sup>6</sup> Extended interviews were conducted on the following dates: Hwang Minwang (10<sup>th</sup> April 2010), Pyön Namsöp (14<sup>th</sup> April 2010), Cho Chonghun (17<sup>th</sup> April) and Pak Sönghun (2<sup>nd</sup> April 2010). All quotes and paraphrases credited to these ritualists have been drawn from these particular interviews, unless otherwise stated; in places, more recent developments are discussed, drawn from follow-up interviews with these same four ritualists conducted by phone on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> June 2016.



Figure 3 (left to right): Hwang Minwang, Pyŏn Namsŏp, Cho Jonghun and Pak Sŏnghun (uncopyrighted public domain images, excepting Cho Chonghun's, provided by Cho – all used with permission)

Before examining each tradition and the views of ritual musicians, it is necessary to summarise the Korean preservation system's history, objectives and *modus operandi*. The Cultural Property Preservation Law (*munhwajae pohobŏp*) was passed in 1962, launching a far-reaching preservation programme encompassing both tangible (*yuhyŏng*) and intangible (*muhyŏng*) heritage. The primary underlying motivations for preservation do not appear to have changed significantly and are succinctly summarised in the Cultural Heritage Charter displayed on the official website (written in 1997)<sup>7</sup>:

A nation's cultural heritage embodies its intellectual and spiritual contributions to the civilization of mankind ... The cultural heritage of Korea, having survived the vagaries of a long and tumultuous history, is particularly dear to us Koreans ... All of us must work together to protect our historic relics ... because, once damaged, they can never be restored to their original condition.

It is significant that Number 1 in the ensuing list of objectives is: 'Cultural heritage must be preserved in its original condition' and Number 2 is 'Cultural heritage must be protected from indiscriminate development'. With these same strictures applied to both buildings and the performing arts, it is clear that the primary aim was never to keep the appointed arts alive as naturally developing artforms; rather it was first to identify the 'original conditions' (*wŏnhyŏng*) and then ensure that a mechanism of transmission was in place to preserve them 'as is' – as icons of Korean identity, representing cultural roots rather than modern Koreanness.<sup>8</sup>

The *modus operandi* for cultural transmission has always been characterised by the imposition of a pyramid hierarchical social organisation upon the focal tradition, wherein each level is associated with specific responsibilities, levels of skill and prestige, and monetary income. As in corporate contexts, this model is presumed to facilitate easy governance and monitoring while fuelling learning through competition. For any appointed genre, there are four different levels: the 'holder' (*poyuja*), who is the paid representative, leader, and primary teacher; 'assistant teachers' (*chŏnsu chogyo*), who are paid supporters in the transmission of the tradition; 'complete people' (*isuja*), who have attained a certain level of mastery but are unpaid; and 'learners' (*chŏnsuja*) who are also unpaid. This system encourages competition, not only at the initial stage of selecting the representative 'holder' but also within the cohorts. For juniors to ascend, they must train for five years and pass an exam, judged by their seniors and members of the central administration, and only one person can

<sup>7</sup> See: [http://english.cha.go.kr/english/about\\_new/charter.jsp?mc=EN\\_02\\_04](http://english.cha.go.kr/english/about_new/charter.jsp?mc=EN_02_04)

<sup>8</sup> For a comprehensive review of the Korean preservation system's history, objectives, regulations and *modus operandi*, see Howard 2006: 1–25 (See also Yang Jongsung 2003; Son T'aedo 2009: 103–125).

succeed to the position of leader (unless the tradition incorporates clearly-delineated roles that do not overlap). The role of preservation is coupled with dissemination; appointed groups must give two regular performances (*chönggi palp'yohoe*) each year – one in the capital and one in the region where the tradition is from, with the venues left up to the appointee's discretion.<sup>9</sup>

The following sections explore each of the four shamanic traditions in turn by outlining each group's initial appointment and assessing the current situation in regard to ritual activities. Ritualists and academics usually differentiate between 'real' (*shilje*) ritual and 'ritual concerts' (*kut kongyŏn*) (see, for example, Park 2003). While the former is performed for and paid for by clients who are actively drawn into the dynamics of the event and believe in ritual efficacy, the latter involves a display for people who neither invited the shamans nor (in most cases) believe in the ritual's efficacy. The ensuing sections focus on the 'real' ritual activities performed in Chindo Island, the East coast, South coast, and Kyönggi regions by the appointed groups; subsequently, discussion will then move on to consider 'ritual concerts'.

### *Chindo Ssikkim Kut*

The island of Chindo has long been regarded as a wellspring of traditional folk culture and *Ssikkim kut*, in particular, as a primary source of inspiration for higher status appointed folk-art genres like *p'ansori* (narrative story telling through song, with drum accompaniment) and *sanjo* (literally, 'scattered melodies', played by a solo instrumentalist with drum accompaniment) (see Howard 2004). Of all the existing types of regional shaman ritual, *Chindo Ssikkim kut* was therefore an obvious first appointment, in 1980, with the first 'holders' being Pak Sönghun's father (Pak Pyöngch'ön) and two others. Crucially, the obligatory ethnographic study that preceded appointment (see Chöng Pyönggho, Chi Ch'unsang and Yi Pohyöng 1979), highlighted not only the appointed ritualists' pedigree – their high standing in the community and extensive lineage going back nine generations – but also their skills as musicians, dancers and word-smiths. Although Pak Sönghun was too young to recall the appointment processes, today he praises the academics' efforts; not only did they secure appointment for his father's group but they also documented the island's broader shaman culture just as the hereditary network was abandoning the profession.

Pak Sönghun explained that *Ssikkim kut*'s richly symbolic content aims to 'remove all bad energies (*aek*), so people don't cling too much to ideas, people and things'. This objective is commonly identified as fundamental to all Korean shaman ritual, by shamans and academics alike, but in the case of *Ssikkim kut* is particularly directed towards absolving death-related psychological problems. As Pak explained, however, opportunities to perform 'real' *Ssikkim kut* are increasingly rare, largely because of radical changes in funeral culture, which came to affect all but the most remote areas of the island during the 1980s. Nowadays, hospitals and funeral parlours are generally perceived to deal with post-death processes sufficiently, and only a small number of bereaved individuals feel the need to employ the services of shamans (see also Pak Migyöng 2011; Park [Pak] 2003).

Some clients employ the services of the appointed experts, inviting Pak Sönghun and his associates to funeral parlours to perform shortened versions of the traditional ritual. Most, however, employ charismatic shamans to perform instead. While charismatic shamans have long existed alongside hereditary shamans in the region, serving different and complementary roles, the former have now increased in number and expanded the range of their services to include '*Ssikkim kut*' – made famous and desirable through ICP

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<sup>9</sup> The four interviewees explained that they often give their Seoul performance in the Important Intangible Cultural Asset Transmission Centre (*Chungyo muhyöng munhwaje chönsu hoegwan*) and treat one of their regional ritual performances as the required second performance, distributing programmes to the assembled throng, collecting photographic evidence of the event, and then supplying these obligatory materials to the preservation system's headquarters.

designation. Expressing sentiments that are commonly encountered amongst the artistically-accomplished practitioners of hereditary-style ritual, Pak is scathing of the charismatic shamans' approach: 'They put on some fancy clothes, throw some cleansing water around, give some oracles, take the money, and it's done! [Laughs] There are so many fake *Ssikkim Kut* about it gives the ritual a bad name'.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, the *Ssikkim kut* appointees are occasionally, though rarely, invited to perform either *saguje* (literally, '49 ceremony') – a related cleansing ritual serving to guide the soul of someone who died 49 days earlier to the Buddhist paradise – or *ch'umojje* (memorial ceremony) – a public form of *Ssikkim kut* conducted specifically to address untimely deaths of deep significance to the wider general public. For example, the group performed *ch'umojje* following the suicide of ex-president No Muhyŏn in 2009 and the Seweol ferry disaster in June 2014. Pak Sŏnghun explained how *ch'umojje* diverges from traditional *Ssikkim kut* in the following terms: most audience members have played no part in inviting the ritualists; performance occurs on stage, promoting psychological distance between active doers and passive viewers and reducing participative content; and texts and actions addressing shamanist deities are reduced or omitted, resulting in lengthy sections being cut. Nevertheless, Pak argued that *ch'umojje* still constitutes 'real' ritual, simply because it addresses the 'real' loss of 'real' bereaved. In fact, he stressed that the performance always has the potential to soothe, whatever the context: 'How one interprets what one sees, whether one believes that it will work or not: that is up to each individual person'.

In 2016, Pak estimated that the number of people learning, transmitting and performing the traditional hereditary-style *Ssikkim kut* had dwindled to approximately 25, all of whom belong to the *Ssikkim kut* preservation society (*pojŏnhoe*), centred on the core group of appointed ritualists. In keeping with regulations, the preservation society's headquarters is located on the island and, accordingly, some members live, learn and teach there, generally complementing their *Ssikkim kut*-related activities with other lines of music-related work. Other members – like Pak himself – have left Chindo, following the example of his famous ritualist father: 'We've dispersed and spread out ... I feel a responsibility both to learn more, and to tell people about our things. Here in Seoul, it's easier for people like you to come and see me! Knowledge and understanding is spreading'.

The ritualists in the *Ssikkim kut* preservation group still resolutely adhere to their age-old custom of hereditary transmission, despite the dwindled pool of expert practitioners, the imposition of the preservation system's ranking and role allocation (which have little correspondence with traditional perceptions and practices), and the involvement of preservation system officials in selection and promotion procedures. Indeed, all the core members of the preservation group, including Pak himself, were either born into or (unofficially) adopted into shaman households, and their primary disciples are likewise either their real offspring or, more often, adopted. Pak considers the maintenance of hereditary transmission – albeit heavily reliant on the adoption of outsiders – to remain an indispensable, defining feature of the tradition. Still today, it marks the ritualists out as 'different' from outsiders (and from the more numerous charismatic shamans) while ensuring close kinship relations and, consequently, strong performance affinity between subsequent generations in the troupe.

#### *Tonghaean Pyŏlshin Kut*

The next hereditary shaman tradition to be appointed was *Tonghaean Pyŏlshin kut*, in 1985 – with Kim Sŏkch'ul and his wife, Kim Yusŏn, as the original holders. With a lineage stretching back four generations, the pair had long been prominent figures in the East coast region's shaman social network, their family troupe

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<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, some appointed *Ssikkim Kut* ritualists supplement their income by working alongside charismatic shamans, enhancing the latter's non-death-related rituals with their artistic skills. Ritual collaboration between charismatic and hereditary shamans is long-established and widespread – appearing to be prevalent in all regions (see Park 2003; Choi 1989: 283–296; Mills 2007: 17–20; Sun 1992).

serving client communities across a vast geographical stretch, from the border with North Korea right down to Pusan (see Mills 2007: 6–9, 91–92). At the same time, however, the pre-appointment research, conducted first by Ch'oe Kilsŏng and Yi Pohyŏng (1972) and then by Yi Tuhyŏn (1984), had also uncovered the existence of other prominent ritualists who performed the same style of ritual, similarly operating within family troupes. Song Tongsuk, in particular, was a similar age to Kim Sŏkch'ul and had a similarly extensive ritualist genealogy, stretching back in time and linking, through marriage, with multiple other hereditary shaman family's (including Kim's) (Yi Kyuwŏn 1995: 508). Unsurprisingly, therefore, the act of selection greatly enhanced inter-group tensions; the animosity identified by Howard (2006: 143–146) as existing between appointed and unappointed Chindo ritualists found parallels in the East coast region. Song's eventual appointment as a 'regional intangible cultural property holder' (*chibang muhyŏng munhwajae poyuja*) did little to diffuse tensions, simply because being an icon of national identity trumps being an icon of regional identity.

Like Pak Pyŏngch'ŏn (for *Ssikkim kut*), Kim Sŏkch'ul quickly became a star in the world of traditional Korean performing arts, and similarly attracted diverse researchers and musical collaborators (see Howard 2006: 153–155). However, unlike Pak, Kim remained based in the East coast region right up until his passing in 2005. Throughout his life, he was devoted to performing ritual alongside his family troupe members, to imparting his skills to the next generation, and to maintaining his hard-earned dominance amongst the rival East coast hereditary shaman troupes who still compete over the dwindling number of coastal client communities (see Yun Tonghwan 2008, 2012).

In the East coast region, there are still communities that periodically hire a hereditary shaman troupe to conduct *Pyŏlshin kut* – a lengthy and expensive ritual lasting at least two days. However, these client communities are decreasing in number and the inter-ritual periods lengthening and, consequently, the shamans have launched their own grass-roots preservation initiative (entirely independent of the official system) – proactively approaching large local companies to contribute towards costs and thereby help sustain tradition. Recognising the part they have played in the demise of local fishing culture, the companies send officials to offer respects and cash to the shamans, and sometimes encourage participation by providing elderly villagers with wads of cash to give to the shamans during proceedings.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the rituals retain a strong flavour of 'realness', with many attendees participating in collective ritual activities and expressing belief in ritual efficacy.

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<sup>16</sup> Chŏng Yŏllak, another *isuja* for *Tonghaean Pyŏlshin kut*, has been leading this initiative (personal communication, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2014; see also Yun Tonghwan 2012).





Figure 4: Participation during *Pyölsin kut*: assisting the shaman in igniting prayers; dancing and attaching money to the shaman's waistband; receiving divination from the shaman; praying before the altar; and being cleansed during late night ritual. All photos by the author (2000, 2009 and 2013).

While preserving the living tradition, the ritualists also preserve their essential defining characteristic of hereditary transmission, albeit with a heavy reliance on the adoption of outsiders, as in the case of the Chindo *Ssikkim kut* ritualists. For example, Cho Chonghun, one of the four primary interviewees for this study, was adopted (unofficially) by Kim Chönghui, who is currently the next-in-line for 'holder' status. Building upon age-old territory-securing strategies (Ch'oe Kilsöng 1981: 104–121), while some of the senior troupe members continue to live scattered across the East coast region, within easy reach of the client communities and the preservation society (*pojönhoe*) headquarters, the remainder are based in the capital, closer to other opportunities.

#### *Namhaean Pyölsin kut*

The next hereditary shaman ritual tradition to be appointed was *Namhaean Pyölsin kut*, in 1987. At that time, the need for preservation must have been acutely felt. Hwang explained that, by the early 1980s, there was only one functioning hereditary shaman troupe in the region, which combined the remaining forces of three shaman families (Chöng, Pak and Kim) with occasional assistance from local musicians. However, a leading figure in the group, the ritual musician Pak Pokkye, died prior to appointment (see also Chöng Pyönggho 1989: 82–83). In our conversation (April 2010), the pioneering folk music scholar Yi Pohyöng recalled that this stimulated a rush to secure the remaining tradition for preservation with various individuals being appointed who had only marginally been involved in ritual life and who were not even of hereditary shaman background, including Yu Tongju as 'holder' (see also Ha Hyogil and Yi Sora 1986). Unfortunately, the appointment did not automatically secure preservation; the current *isuja*, Hwang Minwang, recounts that within a year of appointment, all but one of the troupe's hereditary shamans had died, including Chöng Muyeön and her instrumental accompanist, Pak Pongryul. Chöng Yöngman, the sole remaining hereditary member, had only recently returned to the profession, having tried pursuing less stigmatised professions such as taxi driving, but then suddenly found himself to be, as Hwang puts it, 'the single remaining thread linking the old generation to the new; that's how close our tradition came to being broken'.

The tradition then underwent what Hwang refers to as a period of ‘restoration’ (*pokwŏn*), during which Chŏng taught a core group of two female university students and two accompanying instrumentalists. Chŏng’s own three children then joined the group – similarly university students – and, in 1993, the new outfit presented a ritual concert (*kut kongyŏn*) at an EXPO hosted in Taejŏn (see also Yi Yongbŏm 2011). Partly because it was directed by the well-known director and critic Chin Oksŏp, this performance reportedly attracted great interest:

It wasn’t that people were taking an opportunity given to them; rather they were actively pursuing it. None were from charismatic or hereditary shaman backgrounds; it was people with backgrounds in theatre or traditional music – people like me.

With the group steadily acquiring additional non-shaman recruits over recent years, Hwang pointed out that, in 2016, it was the biggest it had ever been; although 10 rarely participate and only a core group of about eight perform in rituals, the total membership includes over 30 individuals. While some are based in the region, near the headquarters, others are scattered elsewhere, including Hwang himself, who is based in Seoul.

The rapid disappearance of hereditary shaman ritualists in the region has coincided with a rapid decline of patronage. There are now just three communities that periodically hire the troupe to perform full-scale ritual, although the group also performs biannually in Susan, a reconstructed folk village on Kŏje Island. Hwang is from the region and attests that, following the demise of the fishing industry, there has been a mass-exodus of young people. Some communities have entirely disappeared. For example, Chiri village on Kaldŏ island (located next to Hwang’s home-island of Hansando), which is remembered to have sponsored unusually large-scale *Pyŏlshin kut*, is now entirely deserted – as is the whole island. Meanwhile, in 2010, the island of Jukdo, one of the three *Pyŏlshin kut* sponsors, had an average age of 68 and youngest permanent resident of 54. In such places, many traditional ritual objectives – ensuring good fishing and fertility – are of little relevance. In addition, the entire area has been heavily missionised (with ‘a church to every three houses’, Hwang jokes). Accordingly, Hwang observes that, in the few communities that still hire the troupe to perform, it is only amongst the oldest attendees that one might see indications of sincere belief; for others the event is regarded more as an opportunity ‘to have a holiday, drink and watch the entertainment’.

Hwang recognises that restoring *Namhaean Pyŏlshin kut* must have involved a substantial degree of ‘creative remembering’. For the region’s post-death ritual called ‘*Ogu kut*’ (equivalent to Chindo’s *Ssikkim kut*), a single video recording from the early 1980s shows the old masters performing the complete ritual. For *Pyŏlshin kut*, however, sources did not extend far beyond Chŏng Yŏngman’s own memory and the pre-appointment documentation compiled by Ha Hyogil and Yi Sora (1986), which, as for other appointments, only provided a scant overview of the ritual’s elaborate contents. Accordingly, some substantial revisions have been made to performance practice, including, for example, the incorporation of particularly vivid and distinctive episodes that were formerly exclusive to *Ogu kut* (see Figure 5) – in the process, enhancing the performance’s appeal for the increasingly unbelieving observers (see also Kim Hyŏnggŭn 2014).



Figure 5: Dragon boat dance (*yongsŏn norŭm*),<sup>20</sup> originally from *Namhaean Ogu kut*, with Chŏng Yŏngnam providing educative commentary

### *Kyŏnggi Todang kut*

*Kyŏnggi Todang kut*'s appointment in 1990 was another last-minute emergency. Much of this tradition's heartland was subsumed into the sprawling metropolis of Seoul long ago; the Kangnam area, for example, has since become one of the richest neighbourhoods (famously sent up in the viral hit 'Gangnam Style'). By the early 1960s, even the most remote rural communities had abandoned the tradition of hiring hereditary shamans to perform *Todang kut* (Hwang Rushi 1992: 87–88). In marked contrast with the three previously appointed mainland hereditary shaman traditions, as Pyŏn Namsŏp (a prominent ritual musician within the tradition) put it: '*Todang kut* had died'. As with certain other designated traditions, such as Chindo *Tashiraegi* (see Howard 2006: 121–131), appointment was therefore preceded by recreation.

Intriguingly, during our interview, Pyŏn seemed unsure as to why this project was undertaken; not only was the tradition broken but the memories preserved in the minds of just a few had become 'weak, indistinct and faded'. Yi Pohyŏng, who had led the project, explained to me what the main motivations were: the Kyŏnggi area's shaman culture had been markedly distinctive and, consequently, the map of the country's shamanic culture (delineated by the preservation system's catalogue of appointments) seemed incomplete without it – and Yi also wished to secure official recognition for the shamans who preserved the special skills and knowledge (in their heads, if not in practice).<sup>21</sup> The project began in 1980 when two elderly hereditary male ritualists from the area, Yi Yongu and Cho Hanch'un, collaborated in a *Todang kut* recreation, working with local charismatic shamans, including O Subok (the future 'holder') and Sŏ Kannan, and a small group of instrumentalists. According to Pyŏn, it is widely thought that Yi and Cho were the last Kyŏnggi region ritualists of hereditary lineage still active, although they had long ago resorted to conducting smaller-scale rituals alongside local charismatic ritualists (see also Hwang Rushi 1992: 88–89) and performing for charismatic *Seoul kut* ritualists, fostering a markedly different style of ritual (see, for example, Seo 2002).

Yi and Cho's 15-hour creation, performed in the *Tobongsan chang* in 1980, generated a wealth of documentation, featured two skilled ritualists with proven hereditary shaman pedigree, and offered a fairly convincing vision of authenticity – although there has always been contention regarding the ongoing incorporation of charismatic elements (Hwang Rushi 1992: 89, 102; Yi Pohyŏng, personal communication, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010). However, the main obstacle to appointment was the fact that the context itself appeared

<sup>20</sup>Photo from an un-copyrighted public domain blog:

<http://blog.daum.net/blog/BlogTypeView.do?blogid=0MNaf&artid=8951628&categoryid=716266&regdt=20120506220412>.

<sup>21</sup> Personal communication, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

‘artificial’ (*in’gongjök*) – not in any way connected with the needs and traditions of a specific client village (ibid.).

The period of what Pyön referred to as ‘revitalisation’ (*hwoesaeng*) began when the elders of Changmal village were approached with the suggestion of resurrecting their tradition of periodically sponsoring three-day-long *Todang kut*. Changmal had been one of the last client communities to abandon the tradition in the early 1960s and Cho Hanch’un had since retained strong working relations with the community. The elders agreed, reportedly hoping that the ritual might help restore a much-missed sense of community cohesion – not so much through stimulating supernatural intervention but rather through providing villagers with a shared participative experience, promoting a sense of shared cultural history (ibid. 89–95; Kim Hönsön 2014). Soon afterwards, three other communities followed suit.

Following Yi Yongu’s death in 1987, it was recognised that, unless appointment was granted, the *Todang kut* skills, knowledge, and newly revived tradition were in imminent danger of being lost forever. Awarded in 1990 following a final research report by Chang Chugün et al. (1990), ICP designation has subsequently helped to attract a large group of learners – instrumentalists usually having traditional music backgrounds (like Pyön Namsöp) and officiating shamans having charismatic shaman backgrounds (following the leadership and practices of Yi Subok). In this case, the appointees are not so distantly scattered, mainly being based in Seoul and the tradition’s close-by heartlands of Puch’ön and Suwön.

Urban development has promoted dramatic transformations in ritual performance practice and experience. The first two client villages, Changmal and Tongmak, have both been entirely subsumed within the sprawling urban landscapes of Puch’ön and Inch’ön respectively; while Tongmak responded by abandoning the tradition in 1990, Changmal persists. The book *Kyönggido Todang kut* by Kim Sunam, Hwang Rushi and Yi Pohyöng (1992) includes many portentous photos and comments relating to Changmal’s 1982 ritual. One photograph shows the primary ritual performance space (a shrine attached to a sacred shrine tree) with a caption stating: ‘the villagers are worried that this could be the last ritual because of demolition plans’ (Kim Sunam et al. 1992: 76). Another photograph shows Cho Hanch’un performing a ritual procedure with ‘giant monster apartment blocks looming behind; it has not been possible to erect a devil post (*changsŭng*) in the correct spot due to the broad tarmac road, so he is ritually running around (*toltori*) a tray of offerings instead’ (ibid. 72). Nowadays, the main venue for the Changmal *Todang kut* is a vast stage erected in an urban park with banner and bunting, and ample audience seating.

One wonders how much the elders’ urgent hope in 1982 – that the *Todang kut* performance would help restore community cohesion – is realised in contemporary performance. That generation has passed away and the village of Changmal no longer exists as a clearly-boundaried social unit with its own administration and sense of shared identity but rather merges seamlessly with surrounding neighbourhoods. Accordingly, although most of the sacred tutelary sites have been preserved, it seems likely that very few people would feel a need to appease the ancient village tutelary gods. For the majority of the local apartment-block residents, one suspects that the *Todang kut* performance would be perceived as both out-of-place and out-of-time.

#### Ritualist Perspectives: Ritual Concerts

While ‘real’ rituals are increasingly rare and, arguably, increasingly un-‘real’ (relying on external funding rather than client sponsorship, and with diminishing numbers of believers), the ritualists frequently find themselves performing selected sections of traditional ritual on stage, with no dead spirit or bereaved to soothe (for

*Ssikkim kut*) and no local deities to appease (for the other three appointed rituals). All of the preservation groups do more than the obligatory two performances (*chǒnggi palp'yohoe*) each year.

The four interviewees pointed out to me that their rituals have always included a high density of distinctly presentational episodes (see Turino 2008: 59), in which the audience's participative input is limited (see also Kim Hyōnggūn 2014; Meewon Lee 1996; Pak Migyōng 2011; and Yi Aehyōn 2008). As Pak Sōnghun explained, 'it's just that we are now doing it on stage'. Hwang Minwang elucidated the rationale underlying the shamans' emphasis on showmanship as follows:

From the villagers' perspectives, they may believe or they may not: that's their business. But from our perspective, going through the necessary procedures isn't that hard. Rather it's providing a brilliant show that has always been the main concern: that's what will ensure we get invited back again.

At the same time, performing on stage for audiences of non-believers has necessitated extensive adaptations, including: a far briefer performance duration; removal of participative episodes, extended prayers, lengthy narratives and intricate ritual procedures; and the stylisation or removal of certain symbolic elements – with a particularly significant issue being whether or not the altar is included. Meanwhile, certain objectives have come to the fore, namely the presentation of spectacle, virtuosity, contrasting moods, and distinctiveness – in Pyōn's words, 'putting a diverse mix of entertaining things in and taking the boring things out, in order to fill the required time-frame' (see also Howard 2006: 146–152). Pak Sōnghun argues that shaman ritualists have always had to exercise a flexible and eclectic approach:

It was never a case of us only doing the one thing: we'd do various kinds of ritual ... and other kinds of playing too. We had to respond to circumstances – give and take, mix a bit of that with a bit of this, and make a stew. That's the way to make things work, you see? It's always been about responding to the circumstances of the moment, working as intermediaries between people and the unseen gods wherever we are – and that's what we are still doing now.

Significantly, all four ritualists claimed to feel at liberty to develop their own individual creative voices and manipulate form and content, in spite of the preservation systems' stipulation that appointed traditions should not undergo change. Pak Sōnghun explained that this performance freedom partly derived from a lack of meticulousness in the pre-appointment documentation: although particular sequences of ritual sections, musical structures, and texts were identified as the authentic standard or *wōnhyōng* (original condition), the moment-by-moment succession of sounds, movements and actions was never set in stone as a reference point against which all subsequent renditions would be stringently measured (see also Howard 2006: 30–31). The authentic standards remain vague and contested.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, extensive creative editing is widely recognised as a necessity, simply because the sequence of events outlined in the original documentation is so long (in some cases spread over four days). Pak explained: 'So, of course, we all try to develop our own thing and we do things a bit differently every time ... Nobody sits there checking that everything we do is the same – moment by moment, checking against a piece of paper'.

At the same time, however, long-term extensive involvement in presentational performance contexts has clearly been promoting fundamental changes in the ritualists' general approach to performance, as Cho explains:

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<sup>27</sup> Chōng Sujin (2006: 463–490) convincingly argues that the 'original versions' have never actually existed beyond the pre-appointment documents themselves, embodying the researchers' own highly subjective visions of 'the most authentic'. Meanwhile, because the documents provide only very partial representations, they cannot offer clear guidance to either the appointees or the preservation system's examination committee (Han Yangmyōng 2006).

Our music is changing bit by bit. Why? If normal people listen to our music, it's really difficult for them. So, when we're on stage, we play the patterns in a simpler version so people can more easily understand... But real ritual music is that which is played in real ritual. You remember hearing Kim Sŏkch'ul play, yes? That was the real original; because he spent so little time on stage, it wasn't at all refined and had a raw feeling. You could never imagine what would happen next! Kim Yongt'aek [the current holder] spent more time on stage so his playing is more polished, and Kim Junghee [second-in-line] is even more so ... And then there are people like me. That process has already been completed for Chindo *Ssikkim kut*<sup>28</sup> – it's always refined and fastidious – but now it's happening for us too.

As young modern Koreans, the appointed ritualists naturally connect with diverse forms of music outside ritual. Persistent and prolonged engagement with polished studio-recorded products and types of music in which each successive moment is pre-determined (- the norm in all other forms of Korean traditional music) has naturally been further eroding their capacity and inclination to improvise (responding to the dynamics of the moment) – once an integral feature of shaman ritual's therapeutic environment.<sup>29</sup> Other ritualists have similarly expressed concern about what is lost through the re-contextualisation of ritual music-making. Hwang states:

It's common to hear that today's ritual place is the concert hall. But only by keeping the original role properly and fully can people really be able to feel and see what ritual is. If you transfer the things that exist within the village ritual to that new venue, I wonder just how much can really be maintained.

#### Ritualist perspectives: the preservation system

Cho Chonghun has highlighted a major benefit of appointment:

It has granted us a sort of legitimacy amongst normal people... It means that people like our teachers, who didn't complete schooling themselves, are able to go into universities and impart their skills. Without being appointed representatives, it would be absolutely impossible for people like them to even enter an environment like that.

Here, Cho is referring to the stigma attached to the shaman profession. All shaman ritualists in Korea have stories to tell of being taunted or worse, and this stigma prompts many who feel drawn to the profession to attempt pursuing other professions instead; even if they have already become deeply enculturated to the shamanic sub-culture and, in some cases, have also experienced the classic charismatic 'calling', they will typically endure a fraught period of avoidance and resistance before finally committing to shamanic work (Harvey 1979; Hwang Rushi 1988; Mills 2007: 10–13). However, for a very fortunate minority, the preservation system provides a degree of protection against prejudice. Cho explains:

When I was just a learner, even though I fully intended to carry on doing *Pyŏlshin kut*, I couldn't say it out loud. But now I can squarely say to anyone, "I do *Pyŏlshin kut*". "*Isuja*" is a respected official qualification, isn't it, coming with a feeling of responsibility.

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<sup>28</sup> See also Park Migyung [Pak Migyŏng] 2004 and 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Mills offers two analyses of improvised performance in *Tonghaean pyŏlshin kut* (2010 and 2011), exploring how improvisation contributes towards meeting therapeutic objectives. Meanwhile, in line with Cho Chonghun's comments, Yun Tonghwan (2008) identifies general trends of simplification, contraction, omission, and concretization in the treatment of form and content in *Tonghaean pyŏlshin kut*.

With raised status and responsibility, appointment has opened up diverse performance and teaching opportunities beyond the context of community ritual: ritual concerts in Korea and abroad; collaborative creative projects with non-ritualists; teaching posts in universities; projects working with academics; private musical tuition (including tuition of charismatic shamans); and, for many, working alongside charismatic shamans in real ritual. Inevitably, therefore, specialist knowledge and skills have been spreading far beyond the hereditary shamans' formerly endogamous 'closed' social institution, which was once very protective of skills for the sake of business (see Ch'oe Kilsŏng 1981: 115–116). Nowadays, according to Pak Sŏnghun, amongst traditional Korean musicians, 'almost everybody knows some snatches of our music'. It appears to be only the charismatic shamans' unsolicited incorporation of distinctly hereditary-style elements in their own practices that is strongly criticised; Pak Sŏnghun's sentiments about his charismatic counterparts' cleansing rituals in Chindo (discussed above) have been echoed by Cho Chonghun:

I was there at the Korean Folk Arts Festival [*Han'guk minsok yesul ch'ukje*] recently, where local groups show off their local traditions – some hoping to become new appointees. A bunch of charismatic shamans from Ulsan came along with a huge ornate paper lantern (*hŭgaedŭng*) and paper flowers – things taken directly from our tradition! Now that the traditional boundaries have gone for us hereditary shamans, the charismatic shamans have squeezed into the niche and adopted our things, which is particularly upsetting because they can't do things properly.

It is not surprising that the appointees offer generally positive appraisals of the preservation system's influence; after all, it has granted them enhanced status, income and opportunities, promoted widespread recognition of their skills as rare and refined (and iconic of certain facets of Korean identity), and ensured transmission into the future. However, all four interviewees identified challenges that have arisen within their respective groups, directly deriving from the preservation system's modus operandi – and this article will now turn to explore those challenges.

One major challenge concerns the inevitable urge to instigate change. As was outlined earlier, the preservation system decrees that 'Cultural heritage must be preserved in its original condition' – but, of course, there are many factors which precipitate against this desired stasis. Subsequent to the appointment of each tradition, successive generations of learners have tapped the elders' memories and discovered many more details of performance practice, which were not enshrined in the original ethnographic documentation – extensive lore, contested notions of what is artistically and procedurally appropriate, alternative texts, procedures, and patterns of song, dance, and instrumentation. Meanwhile, old masters have passed away,<sup>31</sup> youngsters have entered the tradition (introducing young-generation values and lifestyles), new performance opportunities have appeared, and the whole complex of external factors that inform the ritualists' activities has transformed immeasurably: profound changes have been occurring throughout the traditions' cultures and these are registered in the details of performance. Hwang elaborated on this theme of ongoing change as follows:

Korea has changed immeasurably since the old days so, like it or not, ritualists' lives and activities have changed too ... The initial goal [of the preservation system] was to identify the best performers and the best versions and to document them; those were precisely the things to preserve. So they [the preservation society officials] thought: 'OK, it's done!' But we have actually developed things a lot since then.

Hwang reminded me that Chŏng Yŏngman's recreation of *Namhaean Pyŏlshin kut* had occurred some years after the initial appointment in 1987, employing a different set of musicians, drawing on different sources

<sup>31</sup> The most significant losses since 2010 have been *Kyŏnggi Todang kut*'s 'holder' (*poyuja*) O Subok and *Namhaean Pyŏlshin kut*'s Paek Chŏngja, who was next in line to be 'holder'. In 2016, Pyŏn and Hwang stressed to me that the passing of these authority figures had caused much disruption within the groups.

(most obviously Chŏng's own memory), and being reformulated with the concert hall venue in mind. Pyŏn Namsŏp similarly believes that the reconstruction of *Kyŏnggi Todang kut* has continued well beyond the initial appointment:

The old teachers have gone and memories have faded. So to fill in the holes and create old appearances, we have to be creative. For our tradition, preservation goes with restoration, which goes with creation. We must always revitalise – matching the thoughts and ideas of current culture.

To illustrate this ceaseless process of adaptation, Pyŏn referred to his own musical development. During his ongoing efforts to forge a distinctive musical voice that connects with old performance style and current tastes, Pyŏn has been selectively drawing material from his short-lived lessons with the senior ritualist Pak Tonggŭn (in 2000), from his immediate superiors and peers within the preservation group's hierarchy, and from his experience playing other related genres.<sup>32</sup>

While the ritualists do not feel that the preservation system has overly stultified their development, they do consider the system's attitude of 'change denial' – a term used by Cho Chonghun – to be an obstacle to thorough documentation and accurate representation; the bureaucrats do not maintain a detailed up-to-date picture of the traditions as they exist in the present-day. Accordingly, some of the appointed groups have taken to building up their own archives. For example, Chŏng Yŏllak, an *isuja* for *Tonghaean Pyŏlshin kut*, is meticulous in recording all his group's performances, collecting resources about the tradition, and working with academics to produce up-to-date research. While Chŏng is happy to take on these responsibilities,<sup>33</sup> there are others – both ritualists and academics – who feel that the burden of responsibility should actually lie with the preservation system. Some academics propose that the system would benefit from employing knowledgeable academics to work alongside the administrative staff in the central headquarters and to work within the various appointed preservation groups themselves (for example, Son Taedo 2009: 125)<sup>34</sup>.

Various challenges have also arisen from applying the pyramidal hierarchical structure within the appointed troupes, wherein each tier below 'holder' has markedly less impressive status, 'job title', responsibilities, and monetary payback. Perhaps unsurprisingly, all four *isuja* interviewees took particular issue with the policy of not paying *isuja* at all – especially those busily performing roles more associated with the position of 'assistant teacher' (*chŏnsu chogyo*). Pyŏn Namsŏp explained that, because the *Todang kut* elders were few and elderly, teaching responsibilities mainly fell on a select group of *isuja*. Hwang added that, in the *Namhaean Pyŏlshin kut* group, he and other *isuja* often took over teaching responsibilities because 'the teachers are always travelling around doing lots of special lectures and concerts, which makes it difficult for us'; and, in 2016, he pointed out that this problem had recently become still more acute following the firing of the appointed assistant teacher (*chŏnsu chogyo*) and the system's subsequent refusal to promote any of the current *isuja* to replace him, apparently because they did not meet certain criteria. Cho objected to the absence of payment for a different reason: it necessitates undertaking other wage-earning work, which reduces the amount of time available for skill acquisition, transmission and display. While appreciating the vital artistry that 'real' ritual engenders, Cho particularly resents feeling obliged to perform it in order to live comfortably:

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<sup>32</sup> Various academics have explored other instances of appointees going against the cardinal rule of non-change. See, for example, Han Yangmyŏng 2006; Maliangkay 2012; Son T'aedo 2009; and Yun Tonghwan 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Personal communication, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Son T'aedo (2009) argues that the system has 'failed' in its core objective of preservation, having not sought to define the original forms (*wŏnhyŏng*) more precisely and not continuously monitored the nature and extent of change. While Han Yangmyŏng (2006) similarly advocates continuous post-appointment research and monitoring, he stresses that the system must, at the same time, acknowledge and allow change.



The dominant social view is that it's not OK to make money through shaman ritual and the system says that we should be doing rituals for preservation, not for business. So we ritualists find ourselves in a tricky position. Why would any potential learner willingly enter such an arrangement? Why not do a job that can make you some money?

Pyŏn suggested that the only way to ensure fairness in payment would be for the preservation system to assess 'what each person actually does' and pay them accordingly, rather than simply 'throw all the money' at the higher-level appointees.<sup>36</sup>

In addition, the inflexibility of the hierarchical structure sometimes leads to acute inter-personal tensions within groups. For *Tonghaean Pyŏlshin kut*, for example, the system has permitted the co-existence of three second-level teachers (one male instrumentalist and two officiating female shamans) but has allowed only two top-level 'holders' (one of each). Unfortunately, by the early 2010s, the group members had found themselves at an impasse: a new female holder would soon have to be selected to succeed the ageing Kim Yŏnghŭi and, while the asset system's regulations pointed towards a particular person, some group members held unwavering contrary opinions. The group eventually formulated a cunning scheme to diffuse the situation: after securing the endorsement of a notable academic, they successfully applied for the creation of a new regional asset category (specifically, *Kijang Ogu kut*, Pusan ICP 23, 1/1/2014). So today, while the same ritualists perform in both appointed groups, they have different titles and positions in each – and, crucially, both of the female contenders can now proudly be 'holders'.

## Conclusions

Despite the commonplace binary division of Korean shaman ritual performances into 'real' and 'ritual concert', this study recommends a continuum interpretation. On the 'real' end, there are those East coast village *Pyŏlshin kut* that are still sponsored solely by client communities, involve active participation of much of the community, and include extensive episodes perceived to thoroughly address the needs of those present. Here, there is a palpable sense of shared commitment to ritual objectives, often generating a charged dynamic (see Mills 2011). On the other end of the continuum, there is the staged performance, where the viewers have played no role in inviting the ritualists, do not actively join in at any point, and witness a very small selection of performance episodes which do not appear to address their needs. Here, there is a palpable sense of detachment, spatially and psychologically, and little sense of shared commitment (see Park 2003). Located inbetween, there are the *Ssikkim kut ch'umojje* (memorial ceremonies) and other East coast community *Pyŏlshin kut* – both perhaps more towards the 'real' end – and the few *Namhaean Pyŏlshin kut* and *Todang kut* still conducted for client communities – more towards the 'ritual concert' end. Here, there is dependence on external sponsorship (beyond the immediate community), there are limited opportunities for participative involvement, certain traditional elements are omitted, and commitment to ritual objectives varies amongst attendees.

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<sup>36</sup> Chŏn Chinsŏk and Hong Kŏnp'yo (2012) recognise many of the money- and status-related problems identified by the ritualists: insufficient payment and status at lower levels in the hierarchies, insufficient checks that people's titles match their actual roles, shortages of manpower to transmit, and conflicting commitments to work and transmission. Like Chŏn and Hong, Kim Yŏngguk and O Sŏnggyu (2014) conclude that the ways in which funds are distributed should be totally revised, similarly stressing the need for greater transparency regarding how the funds are actually used to aid transmission.





Figure 6: Mannequin shamans performing ritual in a Pusan museum display<sup>37</sup>

As the preceding discussion has shown, the Korean preservation system has had a profound influence upon the focal traditions' journeys, beginning with the identification, documentation, and sanctioning of the most authentic-seeming versions. For *Namhaean Pyŏlshin kut* and *Kyŏnggi Todang kut*, these initial processes were complemented by processes of recreation, necessary to transform existing fragments and hazy memories into coherent wholes. Consequently, despite the preservation system's guiding ideology of non-change, in practice, it appears to have left some room for developing individual interpretations and, strikingly, in all four traditions, the *isuja* interviewees stressed the necessity of exploiting this space, articulating the exact same well-known adage: 'one must match the times' (*'shidae majch'wŏya hada'*). Of course, the interviewees' attitudes towards change are probably less typical amongst the elders. For example, Kim Yongt'aek (current 'holder' for *Tonghaean Pyŏlshin kut*) consistently expresses a more conservative attitude: 'The younger people like to do things in their own ways but I always tell them: "play what you've learnt just as you've learnt it." Sometimes I wonder if they are listening to me'.<sup>38</sup>

It is apparent that the preservation system has acted as a kind of life-support system for the four focal ritual traditions explored in this article, just as it has for many other Korean traditions. The type of grass-roots self-determinist approach to preservation and continuity advocated by the hugely popular *samulnori* percussionists (and articulated by Hesselink 2012: 131-138) could not possibly be effective for the increasingly disempowered and marginalised ritualists of these dwindling traditions; rather, continuity has been largely dependent upon what Howard incisively terms "interventionist" measures coming from top-down (2006: xiii). Specifically, the preservation system has established iconic status for the ritual arts and their practitioners; it has put in place a mechanism to ensure skill-transmission (with hierarchical allocated roles and pre-promotion examination procedures); and it has made it obligatory for ritualists to disseminate their artistry publicly. Certainly, without the system's intervention, large swathes of the *Namhaean Pyŏlshin kut* and *Kyŏnggi Todang kut* repertoires would have been irretrievably lost a long time ago – not even preserved on old recordings, let alone in any aged performers' minds. Meanwhile, *Chindo Ssikkim kut* would never have been adapted into contemporary *ch'umojje*, finding new life as a means to address wider-scale public bereavement, and even fewer East coast villages would have the inclination to maintain their ongoing traditions of sponsoring *Tonghaean Pyŏlshin kut*. Furthermore, without the raised status granted by appointment, the stigmatised ritualist teachers would never have been able to impart their experience and skills to parties unconnected with

<sup>37</sup> <http://m.blog.daum.net/highandes200/8768016>

<sup>38</sup> Personal communication, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

the traditions' local shamanic subcultures – and, accordingly, fewer non-shaman performers would have been inspired to draw from their artistry in their own creative work<sup>39</sup>. It is therefore clear that the preservation system has facilitated much more than continued performances of ritual in a museum piece state. Although it was not an intention of those who devised it, the preservation system has opened up new channels of influence so the exquisite patterns of the shaman arts, together with some of their significance, can find new life in musical creations of broader cultural relevance.

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<sup>39</sup> The Australian jazz drummer Simon Barker is one of the most widely known musicians to have drawn ideas and material from Korean shaman music; see the film *Intangible Asset Number 82* (Emma Franz 2008).

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